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SUFFOLK COUNTY COMMISSION TO EVALUATE SCHOOL
DISTRICT EXPENSES AND EFFICIENCY

3

OCTOBER 24, 2006

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5

Held at

300 Center Drive

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Riverhead, New York

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6:00 p.m.

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CHAIRMAN LEGISLATOR LOU D'AMARO

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2 A P P E A R A N C E S:

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4 Chairman Legislator Lou D'Amaro

5 Co-Chairman Legislator Daniel Losquadro

6 Dr. Seth Forman

7 Lisa tyson

8 Neil Lederer

9 Dr. Robert Lipp

10 Pat Byrne

11 Dr. Joseph A. Laria

12 Alice Willet

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14 John Clahane

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10/24/06

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CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Ladies and

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gentlemen, good evening. Thank you

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very much for taking the time out to

5 come to this meeting of the Suffolk
6 County Commission to Examine School
7 District Expenses and Deficiencies.
8 To start the commission off this
9 evening, I'm going to ask you to
10 rise for the pledge of allegiance,
11 lead by Legislature Losquadro.

12 (At this time the Pledge of
13 Allegiance was said.)

14 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: For those of
15 you who are here this evening to
16 speak and address the commission,
17 I'm going to ask you to indulge us
18 for a few minutes. We have someone
19 with us, this evening, who is going
20 to make a brief presentation to the
21 committee, the commission, rather.
22 After that we'll get to the public
23 portion. Anyone who has filled out
24 a green card and wants an

25 opportunity to come up and share

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1 10/24/06

2 your ideas with us this evening, and
3 again, we appreciate you being here
4 today.

5 To start off I would like to
6 call on Gary Bixhorn, who is with
7 Eastern Suffolk BOCES, and we would
8 like to thank you very much for
9 helping us in what we're trying to
10 do here. Please go ahead.

11 MR. BIXHORN: Thank you. I would
12 like to thank the commission for
13 your invitation to make a
14 presentation this evening, and I'll
15 do my best to move through it as
16 quickly as possible. There is quite
17 a bit of information here, and I

18 have done this a few times. It
19 takes about half an hour, but I'll
20 move along this evening. I
21 understand you have got time
22 constraints.

23 Innovate Long Island is a
24 planning effort that the Long Island
25 Association initiated this year. In

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1 10/24/06

2 essence what the LIA wanted to do
3 they wanted to seize the opportunity
4 with the upcoming election and
5 legislative session to identify
6 priorities for Long Island, and in
7 essence the LIA engaged in a
8 strategic planning effort on an
9 island-wide basis. The Innovate
10 Long Island work product is a rather

11 comprehensive document. There are
12 copies available from the Long
13 Island Association. I don't have
14 them for the committee this evening.
15 I'm certain the association will
16 provide them to the commission. The
17 LIA established a number of
18 committees in a variety of critical
19 areas to focus on economic planning
20 for Long Island. They're identified
21 on the screen. Human resources,
22 affordable housing, quality of life
23 education. One of the
24 subcommittees, K-12 costs and
25 outcomes, are focused on the cost of

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1 10/24/06

2 education on Long Island and the
3 educational outcomes of students on

4 Long Island.

5 The other committees look into a
6 variety of other areas. The primary
7 goal of each committee and
8 subcommittee was to identify certain
9 action items that could be
10 implemented to benefit Long Island
11 economic planning. There is a long
12 standing relationship between the
13 LIA and the educational community.
14 Since 1996, when the two groups
15 started working together, we have
16 updated, we have produced, and
17 updated, reports that focused on
18 educational spending and focused on
19 educational outcomes. You may
20 remember in the early '90's there
21 was rather a contentious period
22 between the business community and
23 the educational community, and it

24 was at that time the two groups came
25 together and decided that is was

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1 10/24/06

2 important to get a set of data upon
3 which everyone could agree. So, at
4 least if they were going to disagree
5 they would be disagreeing based on
6 facts, that would improve the
7 discourse between the groups. It
8 really has grown into a wonderful
9 cooperative effort over the last few
10 years. I can tell you on Long
11 Island the business community and
12 the school community has established
13 a relationship that is unequal to
14 any other region in the state. The
15 LIA has been provided a lot of
16 leadership in terms of responding to

17 the state aid needs of our schools
18 responding to the CFE situation that
19 has developed over the years. They
20 established Long Island Works, which
21 is a group that promotes school
22 business partnerships. They have
23 been at the forefront of
24 establishing coordinated efforts
25 between Long Island Universities and

8

1 10/24/06

2 school districts. So, they've
3 really, really stepped up to the
4 plate and made a difference as far
5 as education on Long Island is
6 concerned.

7 This report is an update,
8 provides an update of past reports.
9 It is the most recent information

10 that is available. It is all based
11 on information that's been bedded
12 (phonetic spelling) by the state
13 education department, state
14 comptroller's office, the state
15 department of labor. This all comes
16 from sources within state
17 government. Basically, what we have
18 done is we have looked at just about
19 every input possible in terms of
20 spending, and we have looked at all
21 of the output data available from
22 the state education department. All
23 of the data in the report is
24 arranged in 18 different tables.
25 Each one is documented in terms of

1 10/24/06

2 the source data, based on the facts

3 that we were able to identify as a
4 result of analyzing the data. In
5 each one of those tables we
6 identified 20 key facts. Based on
7 the 20 key facts about Long Island
8 education we established a set of
9 goals, or what we call, priorities
10 for statewide school finance reform.

11 So, what I would like to do now
12 is walk you through the key facts,
13 and the conclusions that we drew
14 based upon these facts. You have
15 been provided with a copy of the
16 report, which is the gray document
17 that is in front of you. That
18 document is actually included within
19 this document. But it is an
20 appendix to the larger report. What
21 you have in front of you is the C12
22 cost and outcome report, which is

23 the subject of my presentation this
24 evening.

25 Key fact number one: Long

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1 10/24/06

2 Island's elementary, middle, and
3 secondary school students
4 consistently out perform other
5 students statewide on all the
6 assessments and regents exams that
7 are administered by the state
8 education department. However, one
9 new area that we have looked at in
10 this report. This is not something
11 that we have done in the past. We
12 looked at differences between Long
13 Island's wealthiest and Long
14 Island's poorest school districts.

15 Everyone is aware that Long

16 Island has 125 school districts.
17 What we did is we identified 89
18 school districts that met the
19 following criteria: K12 educational
20 programs and had an enrollment of
21 greater than 1,500 students. So,
22 basically we identified a core group
23 of school districts, and based out
24 of those 89 school districts we
25 looked at the results coming out of

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1 10/24/06

2 the top nine and the bottom nine.
3 So, in essence we looked at the top
4 ten percent of school districts and
5 the bottom ten percent of school
6 districts by wealth data. Wealth
7 was determined using the combined
8 wealth ratio. Combined wealth ratio

9 is an indicator that has been used
10 for years by the state education
11 department. It is a measure of
12 income wealth and property wealth in
13 each school district. When you fill
14 out your state income tax form you
15 notice there is a code for your
16 school district. That information
17 is drawn together up in Albany, and
18 there is an aggregate per pupil
19 income established for your
20 community, and, also, a per pupil
21 property wealth data for your
22 community. That information is
23 pulled together and there is a
24 combined wealth ratio. What it
25 allows us to do is compare wealth

2 across the state.

3 So, we know the relative wealth
4 of everyone of the 700 school
5 districts in the state.

6 The first table that we are
7 displaying shows the outcomes of
8 Long Island students on the
9 assessments compared to students
10 from across the rest of the state.
11 As you can see, on every one of the
12 assessments from grade four English
13 Language Arts, social studies,
14 mathematics, science, eighth grade
15 ELA and social studies, math and
16 science. In every one of the tests
17 Long Island kids do considerably
18 better than kids from across the
19 rest of this state. These are kids
20 performing at level three and four.
21 Level three and four represents

22 either meeting or exceeding the
23 state's standards.

24 The other thing that even makes
25 these numbers more impressive in the

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1 10/24/06

2 rest of the state is we do not
3 include New York City data. If we
4 were to include New York City in the
5 rest of this state those numbers
6 would be drawn down. So, actually
7 we are even doing better than this
8 chart would indicate.

9 The next table is the percentage
10 of kids scoring 65 or better on
11 regents exams. That's kids passing
12 regents exams. You can see, again,
13 when you compare Long Island
14 students with the kids in the rest

15 of the state, on every one of the
16 regents exams Long Island students
17 do better than kids in the rest of
18 the state. In essence, the outcomes
19 based on the data for Long Island
20 students is very impressive in terms
21 of by every measure our kids out
22 perform students from the rest of
23 the state. What those averages tend
24 to mask, and the averages are very
25 impressive, there are dramatic

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1 10/24/06

2 differences in terms of performance
3 when you look at district by
4 district on Long Island.

5 Earlier I mentioned to you that
6 we identified the wealthiest and the
7 poorest districts on the Island, and

8 we compared the outcomes of those
9 districts. In this next table it
10 gives the data that substantiates
11 the difference.

12 Just to look at one, these are
13 the five regents exams that are
14 required for high school graduation.
15 These are the five most common
16 regents exams. You can see on the
17 English regent, close to 90 percent
18 of all the kids on Long Island pass
19 the test. If you look at those nine
20 wealthiest districts it is close to
21 96, 95.7 percent scored 65 or
22 better. If you look at those least
23 wealthy districts the passing rates
24 drops to 78 percent. If you look at
25 each one of these tests in each one

1 10/24/06

2 of these areas there is a
3 significant gap between the rich and
4 poor districts.

5 When you hear politicians, or
6 educators, talking about the
7 achievement gap that is what we're
8 looking at right here. The
9 achievement gap on Long Island,
10 based on this analysis and data, is
11 alive and well. It is something
12 that has not been documented well in
13 the past, but there is a
14 considerable difference between the
15 performance of kids in those two
16 groups of school districts.

17 Key fact number two: Long
18 Island has a very large limited
19 English proficient population and it
20 is growing. Five percent of the

21 kids on Long Island are classified
22 as being limited English
23 proficiency. These are kids that
24 grow up in houses where English is
25 not the first language. If

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1 10/24/06

2 you desegregated this data Suffolk
3 County has a higher percentage than
4 Nassau County. But, if you look at
5 the differences the county of
6 Cortland County has half a percent
7 of kids classified as limited
8 English proficient. Long Island,
9 five percent. The one thing I have
10 to mention in terms of looking at
11 these counties, enrollments in
12 counties, you have to recognize Long
13 Island when you combine Nassau and

14 Suffolk has an enrollment of close
15 to half a million kids, and in some
16 cases we are comparing enrollments
17 in counties where the aggregate
18 enrollment in all of the school
19 districts is less than a thousand.
20 So, you really have to look at the
21 differences between the data related
22 to each one of the counties. I
23 believe in the Appendix A of the
24 report there is a county by county
25 breakdown of the enrollment. When

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1 10/24/06

2 you get a chance take a look at this
3 in a little greater detail.

4 Key facts three and four: Long
5 Island's percentage of the kids
6 graduating with regents diplomas in

7 Long Island is ranked above the
8 county at the median. A regents
9 diploma is a diploma that has
10 certain criteria established by the
11 state to allow the child to graduate
12 with a regents diploma. It
13 indicates a certain degree of rigor
14 in the high school program and Long
15 Island, the percentage of kids
16 graduating with regents diplomas
17 exceeds at the median in the state.
18 It is not a large difference.

19 However, when you consider the
20 number of kids we have completing
21 programs you're talking about a lot
22 of kids, and a lot more kids
23 graduated with a regents diploma
24 than in other regions of the state.

25 However, that tends to mask

10/24/06

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2 significant differences between the
3 wealthy and least wealthy districts.
4 You will see a much higher
5 percentage in the wealthy districts
6 graduating with regents diplomas
7 than in the least wealthy districts.
8 We'll go back over that data in a
9 minute.

10 In terms of the percentage of
11 kids going on to post-secondary
12 education, again, Long Island ranks
13 high, third in the state among all
14 counties, 90 percent of our kids
15 going to post secondary education it
16 is far higher than the median of 83
17 percent and far higher than the
18 county with the lowest percentage of
19 kids at 71 percent.

20 Key facts six and seven: The
21 dropout rate on Long Island is low.
22 When you compare it to the rest of
23 the state dropout data is something
24 that the state has worked on over
25 the last few years. There are some

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1 10/24/06
2 different numbers in terms of
3 dropouts and completers. However,
4 the numbers that are used in this
5 particular chart, which are for
6 comparison purposes, are accurate,
7 and it is one of the bits of data
8 that the state has maintained over
9 long periods of time. It is one of
10 the few indicators of student
11 achievement that we have any sort of
12 historical longitudinal data to

13 review.

14 The next table gives you a
15 comparison of the kid percentage of
16 kids in the least wealthiest and the
17 wealthiest districts and how in each
18 one of these indicators that we just
19 talked about. You see that in
20 percentage of limited English
21 proficiency in the least wealthy
22 districts 12 percent of the kids.
23 Limited English proficiency in the
24 wealthiest districts, it is less
25 than five percent. Dropout rate in

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1 10/24/06

2 the poorest district 6.7 percent.
3 In the wealthiest it is less than
4 one percent. Students graduating
5 with regents diplomas: Least

6 wealthy districts 47 percent, the
7 wealthiest districts 83 percent. A
8 very significant difference.

9 Percentage of kids going into
10 post-secondary education, wealthiest
11 districts 93 percent; poorest
12 districts 77 percent. This is
13 important because there is a
14 perception that Long Island is
15 uniformly wealthy. That Long Island
16 has school districts, and students
17 who come from very wealthy
18 communities supported by very
19 wealthy homeowners is just not the
20 case.

21 When you start looking at the
22 numbers, and we have more data along
23 those lines, Long Island has many,
24 many very large school districts
25 that fall below the state average in

1 10/24/06

2 terms of wealth when you look at the
3 combined wealth ratio.

4 The next set of facts, eight and
5 nine, this is really one of the
6 original findings of the LIA, and
7 the Long Island Education Coalition,
8 when we started working together,
9 and this is something that has
10 picked up some momentum in Albany
11 over the years. This is the fact
12 that state aid dollar, a dollar
13 coming to Long Island is worth far
14 less than it is in other areas in
15 the state, because we have a higher
16 cost of living on Long Island. A
17 thousand dollars going to the lowest
18 cost region in the state is

19 equivalent of \$668 coming to Long
20 Island. So, the dollar on Long
21 Island buys only about two thirds of
22 what a dollar in the lowest cost
23 region purchases. However, dollars
24 are distributed ion the state aid
25 format, but has very little to do,

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1 10/24/06

2 very little recognition of the
3 regional cost differences.

4 So, when dollars are divvied up
5 the differences in terms of what a
6 dollar can buy are not considered in
7 any significant way through the
8 state aid format. When you adjust
9 the per pupil cost of schooling on
10 Long Island, and you compare that to
11 other regions of the state, what you

12 find is that the cost of the per
13 pupil cost of education on Long
14 Island is 6.6 percent lower than the
15 regions at the median. I mention
16 the regions. The regions are not
17 something that we dreamed up. The
18 regions are based upon the state
19 department of labor data. These are
20 the labor force regions that the
21 state has established, and the
22 regional cost index is an index that
23 has been developed in Albany. This
24 is not a locally developed index.
25 As you can see, the nine regions are

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1 10/24/06

2 clearly identified on the map.

3 On the next table the relative
4 purchasing power of the other \$1,000

5 in the north country buys \$1,000
6 worth of goods and services. In
7 Central New York, which is the
8 region at the median, it buys \$883
9 worth of goods and services, and on
10 Long Island, all things being equal,
11 it buys \$668 of goods and services.

12 Key facts -- again, when we get
13 to comparison per pupil expenditures
14 you can see that Long Island ranks
15 at \$10,017, slightly below the
16 median of \$10,727 after you adjust
17 regional cost differences. If you
18 look at the unadjusted number the
19 actual per pupil cost on Long Island
20 is \$14,495.

21 Key facts 10 and 11. These are
22 numbers that people sometimes find
23 hard to believe, but over the last
24 ten years Long Island has

25 experienced an average two

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1 10/24/06

2 percentage point annually in per
3 pupil expenditures. The average
4 annual expenditure for the county,
5 the median was 3.2 percent. Taxes
6 have gone up a lot more quickly at a
7 rate much higher than per pupil
8 expenditures. Expenditures are
9 basically the budgets that are
10 established by the districts so the
11 districts can control. Taxes are
12 based upon a combination of
13 expenditures and revenues, and what
14 has happened over the years there's
15 been a shift in terms of the amount
16 of revenues that had to be generated
17 locally, because the share of the

18 funding coming from the state has
19 decreased. That's why the two
20 percent increase, tends to be
21 something that people are surprised
22 at.

23 The other thing that impacts the
24 per pupil cost is the number of
25 students. One thing people have

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1 10/24/06

2 tended to ignore over the last ten
3 years is that we have experienced
4 annually a 1.8 percent growth in
5 student enrollment. Now, on a
6 year-to-year basis that does not
7 sound like a lot, but when you look
8 at the impact over the course of ten
9 years that's an 18 percent increase
10 of student enrollment on Long

11 Island. Most of you probably live
12 in a school district where
13 construction has occurred over the
14 last few years, or a school that had
15 been closed has been reopened and
16 renovated. What happens as the
17 enrollment in the rest of the state
18 has shrunk, enrollment on Long
19 Island has increased, and,
20 therefore, the share of kids
21 attending school on Long Island, the
22 share of kids statewide attending
23 school on Long Island has grown
24 significantly over that period of
25 time.

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1 10/24/06

2 If you look at the chart that
3 basically talks about the per pupil

4 expenditures. You see that is a 20
5 percent increase during that
6 ten-year period on Long Island. You
7 compare that to the county of the
8 median 3.2 percent a year. If you
9 look at Wyoming County at the top,
10 54 percent increase. But what is
11 happening in many of these districts
12 the costs have not gone up 54
13 percent. As I mentioned earlier,
14 many counties in the state are
15 losing enrollment. When you combine
16 increasing costs and a significant
17 decline in student enrollment that
18 resulted in a huge per pupil
19 expense. Another thing, that is
20 kind of interesting, is if you look
21 at this, is the per pupil, measuring
22 the dual impact of per pupil cost
23 and student enrollment, and the

24 relatively low increase in
25 expenditures, as established in the

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1 10/24/06

2 budgets, and you compare to what has
3 happened in terms of what's happened
4 over the last few years in terms of
5 property taxes, there is a complete
6 disjoint between the two sets of
7 numbers. The percent change of
8 student enrollment, again, over the
9 last ten years shows you there's
10 been an 18 percent increase on Long
11 Island. You can see that the county
12 at the median, that's Oswego County,
13 has lost 5.2 percent with enrollment
14 drop. That just shows you that
15 across the state the number of kids
16 enrolled in schools has shrunk

17 dramatically except on Long Island,
18 and if you look at the district that
19 has the number one rate of
20 enrollment is Westchester, the
21 entire growth of population, student
22 population, in New York is occurring
23 down state, and that is happening at
24 the same time that the population is
25 shrinking upstate.

28

1 10/24/06

2 Key facts 12, 13, 14 and 15,
3 this is data that comes directly
4 from the New York State Department
5 of Labor. It comes right off the
6 Department of Labor website, and
7 basically this is information on
8 teacher's salaries. What you will
9 find is that an elementary, the

10 average elementary teacher's salary
11 on Long Island is \$67,370, and that
12 is only slightly more than the
13 statewide average of \$67,180. These
14 are not numbers that are adjusted to
15 regional cost differences. These
16 are the actual numbers directly from
17 the department of labor. What you
18 see, and the reason we have
19 elementary, middle and secondary as
20 the three groups is basically that
21 is how the department of labor
22 breaks them out. In each one of
23 these categories you can see that
24 the average salary for a Long Island
25 teacher is very similar to the

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10/24/06

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salaries of teachers across the

3 state, and what that tells you is if
4 Long Island is a higher cost region
5 basically the teachers on Long
6 Island are pulling down essentially
7 a salary equivalent to the state
8 average at a much higher cost
9 region.

10 The next table just provides a
11 little bit more material. The
12 department of labor breaks out
13 classified teacher's salaries by
14 entry level, by mean, average and
15 experience. And, basically, when
16 you have some time you can take a
17 look at the definition as to how
18 they come up with that. Again, in
19 each one of the categories the Long
20 Island average is very similar to
21 the state average.

22 The next thing we provided for

23 you, and there is a longer list
24 inside the report, is the list of
25 the occupations which are comparable

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1 10/24/06

2 salaries to teachers. You can look
3 through the list and pick out the
4 salaries and the teacher's salaries
5 are ranked amongst the other
6 occupations. This gives you an idea
7 of the type of work we value similar
8 to teachers.

9 Key fact number 16: As a
10 percentage of gross household income
11 Long Islanders spends about 20
12 percent more than New York in
13 general. Long Islanders are much
14 heavier dependant on the property
15 tax on Long Island than other

16 regions of the state. When you
17 couple that with the fact that our
18 costs are actually in line with the
19 rest of the state, our adjusted
20 cost, then it just shows you there
21 is something occurring where the
22 support of education on Long Island
23 had been shifted dramatically
24 towards property tax.

25 The third and fourth paragraph,

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1 10/24/06

2 I just want to point out that, on
3 Long Island there are 39 school
4 districts that receive less than ten
5 percent of their income from the
6 state. So, those are districts that
7 are raising 90 to 95 percent of
8 their revenues with property taxes.

9 Out of the entire state there is
10 only 74 districts in that category
11 on a statewide basis, and 39 of
12 them, or 53 percent, are on Long
13 Island. If you go up to the next
14 category of school districts these
15 school districts receive between ten
16 and 30 percent of the revenues from
17 the state. There are 55 in that
18 category, and that is 39 percent of
19 140 school districts that are in the
20 state that are only receiving
21 between ten and 30 percent. If you
22 add together the 39 districts that
23 are getting less than ten percent
24 and the 55 school districts
25 receiving between ten and 30

2 percent, basically 94 school
3 districts on Long Island are
4 receiving less than 30 percent or
5 less of their income from the state.
6 Those districts are taxing property
7 taxes for 70 percent of their
8 income. The old system of
9 allocating aid in the state, and we
10 still have the remnants of it in the
11 current allocation system where the
12 state shares. In the old days the
13 state would be divided up into
14 upstate, New York City and Long
15 Island, and the share of money
16 allocated from Albany would be
17 essentially equal to the percentage
18 of kids in each one of the regions.
19 What has happened over the years is
20 the shares were frozen a number of
21 years ago, and the formula has moved

22 away from the shares, and in essence
23 we have been -- we're currently
24 stuck on a share that is far lower
25 than our current percentage of kids

33

1 10/24/06

2 enrolled in our schools. We get
3 them about 12.7 percent of aid on a
4 state-wide basis directed to Long
5 Island, and at the same time we have
6 about 16.7 percent of the kids in
7 our schools.

8 In essence what's happened is the
9 shares have, as we have undergone
10 growth in students over the last
11 decade and the share was frozen at
12 some point during that time, we have
13 actually grown and that's in part, I
14 think, a major factor behind the

15 shift of costs from the state to the
16 local level.

17 Key fact number 18 is the Star
18 Program, and the Star Program is a
19 property tax subsidy that provides
20 critical tax relief to qualified
21 individuals, and the Star Program
22 was implemented because Long Island
23 is over dependant on property taxes
24 and needed the relief that Star
25 provides. About \$641,000,000 comes

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1 10/24/06

2 to property tax payors on Long
3 Island through Star. It's critical
4 hardened relief to people that need
5 it. Star is not state aid to
6 schools, and this tends to become a
7 little bit of a bone of contention

8 when you start talking about state
9 support of schools, and when you
10 start talking about the degree to
11 which the state is supporting school
12 costs a lot of the -- there is a
13 difference because state support, as
14 the way it is looked upon in Albany,
15 includes Star, and, indeed, Star
16 does go to provide tax relief, which
17 is in large part due to property
18 taxes.

19 However, Star is not aid that
20 comes to school districts. If that
21 \$641,000,000 came to school
22 districts obviously taxes would be,
23 the tax rate or the tax levy that
24 the school districts establish would
25 be lower. It is a simple fact. So,

10/24/06

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2 Star is a targeted tax subsidy
3 absolutely critical to people on
4 Long Island, and we're no way
5 diminishing the importance of Star.
6 What we're saying is Star is not
7 school aid.

8 The next chart is something you
9 probably want to take a look at
10 after I finish my brief
11 presentation. I just want to point
12 out a couple things here. What you
13 have here is on a county-by-county
14 basis. You can compare the
15 percentage of revenue coming to your
16 school districts from the state.
17 You can add the Star subsidies, if
18 you wish, if you want to consider
19 Star state support. The third
20 column shows you the total of state

21 support for your schools. In
22 Suffolk County the total is about
23 30, just under 40 percent. In
24 Nassau County it is far lower, about
25 25 percent. On an island-wide

36

1 10/24/06

2 basis, 33 percent. If you look at
3 the first column that gives you the
4 state aid, and you can see the Star
5 is pretty much distributed evenly
6 across the board and across the
7 state. The numbers here that would
8 tend to jump out at you, we get next
9 to no federal aid considering all of
10 the mandates we get from the federal
11 government. We're being
12 shortchanged there.

13 But if you look at the level to

14 which schools on Long Island are
15 dependant upon property taxes, and
16 you compare that to the rest of
17 state, you can see on Long Island
18 we're raising just about 65 percent
19 of our revenue through property
20 taxes, and in the rest of the state
21 that number is about 45 percent.
22 That is a significant difference
23 between Long Island and the rest of
24 the state.

25 I have only got two more facts.

37

1 10/24/06

2 Key fact number 19 is something that
3 everybody has been involved in.
4 Long Island economics for years
5 knows we send up a much greater
6 share of both income tax and sales

7 tax then we get back in aid from
8 Albany. About 30 percent of annual
9 taxable sales statewide, excluding
10 from Long Island and about 36
11 percent of state income tax, again
12 excluding New York City coming from
13 Long Island far less than the share
14 of aid that we get back for schools
15 or any other governmental unit.

16 Key fact number 20, this is one
17 that I think everybody should pay a
18 little bit of attention to. This
19 goes back to that perception that
20 Long Island is uniformly wealthy.
21 It is not the case. If you look at
22 where the kids are, and where the
23 large numbers of kids are, there are
24 large numbers of kids in property
25 poor school districts. If you look

10/24/06

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in eastern Suffolk County, the region which I work, 66 percent of the kids in eastern Suffolk County are in school districts of below average wealth. In western Suffolk that drops to about 28 percent. In Nassau county it is about 9.9 percent. Overall on Long Island 34 percent of the kids, or over a third of the kids, are in school districts that are below average wealth. This is using that combined wealth ratio as the measure of wealth.

Basically, to summarize by every measure our kids are doing better than kids in other regions in the state. However, there is a gap between kids in wealthy and poor

20 districts. Our costs are in line
21 with the rest of the state after you
22 account the regional cost
23 differences. Property tax burden is
24 disproportionately heavy for Long
25 Islanders. Long Islanders 64

39

1 10/24/06

2 percent of school costs. With
3 property taxes it's opposed to 44
4 percent in the rest of the state,
5 and, in essence, leads us to the
6 conclusion that the Long Island
7 system of financing schools needs to
8 be reformed. And what really needs
9 to happen is within the context of
10 statewide reform the tax relief is
11 needed for Long Island, and it
12 really should come from additional

13 aid, additional support from New
14 York State.

15 What we believe should be the
16 states priorities as they engage in
17 the school finance reform, what
18 they'll be doing over the next few
19 months, hopefully as a result of the
20 TFE situation is the state must
21 substantially increase education
22 funding. Even an additional 3.9
23 billion dollar increase statewide
24 will only raise the state's share to
25 the national average of 48.6

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1 10/24/06

2 percent. That means if you rank the
3 50 states the average level of state
4 support among all the states is 48.6
5 percent. We are below that by about

6 3.9 billion dollars. If there is
7 additional funding built into the
8 state aid formula we would then rise
9 to the national average. If you
10 remember a few years ago there was
11 an advocacy for fifty-fifty funding.
12 Fifty-fifty funding would require
13 more than the, obviously, 3.9
14 billion dollars. In terms of
15 reforming the state aid formulas
16 what is most important from a Long
17 Island point of view is that the
18 regional cost differences be
19 factored into the formula in a
20 significant manner. School
21 districts needs, based upon
22 demographic achievement and wealth
23 data, has to be built into the
24 formulas. We believe that every
25 school district should get a share

10/24/06

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of state aid. We believe there

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should be a multi-year appropriation

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so that the school districts can

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plan on a multi-year basis, and the

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existing complex system, essentially

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nobody understands, should be

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simplified.

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All of this will result in

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increased funding appropriately

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allocated will provide tax relief to

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Long Islanders, and that's the

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bottom line in terms of our

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particular focus and this

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presentation. And as an additional

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point in recognizing reform is going

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to be difficult to achieve even in

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the absence of reform the very

19 simple adjustment, I'm saying
20 simple, mathematically simple,
21 adjustment of the shares to reflect
22 our actual enrollment on Long Island
23 would generate an additional
24 \$680,000,000 for Long Island
25 schools. In the absence of reform

42

1 10/24/06

2 just acknowledgement of shares would
3 be a stop gap measure that we
4 believe is essential. Thank you.
5 Sorry I took so long.

6 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Thank you
7 very, very much for that informative
8 presentation. Did anyone on the
9 commission have any questions of
10 Mr. Bixhorn?

11 MS. TYSON: One clarification.

12 When one -- graduation reaches 32
13 percent is that there so much lower
14 or when we are looking at graduation
15 and groups maybe it's a different
16 clarification?

17 MR. BIXHORN: I mentioned it in
18 the report and it is too complicated
19 to get involved with. But the state
20 has changed the way in which they
21 look at dropouts opposed to
22 completers, and you have probably
23 heard the commissioner talk, over
24 the last few months, about the
25 percentage of kids that finish

43

1 10/24/06

2 school in four years opposed to five
3 years. It is a far lower percentage
4 than is reflected in, if you simply

5 look at the dropout rate of six or
6 seven percent subtracted that from a
7 hundred percent. The difference is
8 the old dropout rate data is
9 basically based upon formal legal
10 dropout from schools, and that is
11 the data that has been maintained
12 historically by the department. In
13 essence, it really understated the
14 number of kids that are leaving
15 school before 12th grade. In the
16 absence of any other historic data
17 that's what we're working with.

18 So, the numbers that are being
19 more commonly quoted now, 60 or 65
20 percent of the kids are graduating.
21 That district may still show a
22 dropout rate of seven, eight or nine
23 percent. There is a discrepancy and
24 something that the department has

25 been working on over the last few

44

1 10/24/06

2 years to try to justify, explain the
3 differences between the two numbers.
4 It's been a major challenge.

5 MS. TYSON: Would regents --
6 these changes, people are not able
7 to graduate without a regents
8 diploma, does it change what is
9 going to happen there?

10 MR. BIXHORN: That changed a few
11 years ago. The capacity of schools
12 to offer local diplomas has greatly
13 diminished. The state really phased
14 in the requirements. I think last
15 year was the first year that they
16 were fully phased in. These numbers
17 are a few years old, because it

18 takes the state a few years to
19 verify. These numbers I think this
20 are 2004 2005 data. Those
21 percentages will increase over the
22 next couple of years.

23 DR. LIPP: Thank you. I have a
24 quick question for you. One of the
25 conclusions after key fact 20

45

1 10/24/06

2 indicate went in line with the state
3 after costs ing for regional costs
4 per pupil, 6.7 percent below the
5 statewide median. But I think the
6 point there is that tax spending
7 from all sources -- your reports
8 also concluded we're too heavily
9 dependant on the property taxes to
10 get this ease of spending.

11 MR. BIXHORN: We make the point,
12 elsewhere in the report, I might
13 have skipped it, we say our tax
14 burden is heavier in our part of the
15 state. Long Islanders use 20
16 percent more of the gross household
17 income to pay their property taxes,
18 and at the same time our costs are
19 in line. Somewhat is the problem?
20 If our spending is in line and our
21 effort is greater, than the problem
22 is where we're picking up too much
23 of the tab of the property tax.

24 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: I guess
25 another way to say that the state

46

1 10/24/06

2 aid -- through you when is scued to
3 our disadvantage.

4 MR. BIXHORN: Yes, regional costs
5 are not recognized. I don't believe
6 the needs shown by the data, of the
7 kids in the school districts is
8 necessarily recognized. We have a
9 lot of kids. As that last slide
10 indicates we have a lot of kids in
11 very poor school districts.

12 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Do you know,
13 offhand, if the state aid that came
14 down most recently changed those
15 numbers at all?

16 MR. BIXHORN: The shares are
17 all not significantly.

18 DR. LIPP: I was wondering if you
19 knew of any research that looked at
20 whether or not to what extent
21 economies scale for insurance when
22 you look at the costs and do people
23 base -- it is a good way of

24 normalizing the data to some extent.
25 Perhaps there may be a scale that --

47

1 10/24/06

2 at the risk of exaggerates. I would
3 never recommend it, just -- if you
4 had only had one school district not
5 work as is theory that -- we reduced
6 the overall -- considerable. I
7 don't believe that's a good idea at
8 all. I'm trying to make the point
9 this theory, there are scales --
10 about that.

11 MR. BIXHORN: Well, in terms of
12 school size, and school district
13 size there's been a lot more
14 research done on school size, and
15 optimum high school size than there
16 has been on school districts and

17 school district organization. It is
18 not something that we looked at as
19 part of this particular study.

20 Co-CHAIR LOSQUADRO: To follow-up
21 on that thought, I notice that in a
22 lot of figures we see New York City
23 included or excluded. If you look
24 at the economy of scale New York
25 City is obviously run as a city wide

48

1 10/24/06

2 district. I sincerely doubt that
3 their numbers are fair numbers. In
4 fact, since we exclude them from the
5 data I imagine they are far worse?

6 MR. BIXHORN: Their per pupil
7 expenditure would probably be lower
8 than ours. The reason we excluded
9 New York City from the comparisons

10 is that the system is almost a state
11 unto itself. In other words, their
12 system of support is so much
13 different. They have very low
14 dependant on the property tax as
15 opposed to other districts, and they
16 have the ability, since they're run
17 by the City government, the budget
18 established for the board for the
19 city school board is more completely
20 integrated with the City budget.
21 One of the issues that is going to
22 come up around CFE, Campaign for
23 Fiscal Equity, and the whole
24 question for support of city schools
25 the courts have said the schools are

3 real question there is, how much are
4 they underfunded, but why is the
5 underfunding occurring? Is the City
6 picking up their fair share of the
7 cost of education, and are they
8 looking for the state to make up
9 for, you know, for the deficiency.

10 I think that is going to be the
11 critical question in terms of how
12 all this spans out with CFE, and it
13 is something that really needs a
14 very critical line in terms of
15 identifying the burden that the City
16 has put on itself to support it's
17 own school system.

18 DR. LIPP: My concern is if you
19 look at the Campaign for Fiscal
20 Equity and the theory there is lots
21 of money for the state to give to
22 New York City, as what I see.

23 Hopefully, I'm wrong. If anything,
24 state aid to Long Island school
25 districts would become a smaller

50

1 10/24/06

2 piece of the pie. If you think it
3 is bad now you ain't seen nothing
4 yet. What we're talking about here
5 is approaching -- we should get a
6 bigger piece of action. We renovate
7 school districts. The students and
8 in terms of also, or the -- we
9 reviewed by the state. When you
10 look at the key chief -- against
11 we're achieving -- my let's -- on
12 back in the state is looking at --
13 Therefore, we need to give more
14 money to the City. Some poor
15 schools, some happen to be on Long

16 Island. What I'm not seeing is that
17 I'm not capable of doing it myself
18 is that, does the reality or a
19 reality check to say, hey, we need
20 to think of alternatives. We can
21 approach the -- here the state in
22 all -- done. If you have any
23 brilliant ideas. That is not a
24 simple question to answer.

25 MR. BIXHORN: Well, the key to

51

1 10/24/06

2 our -- what we established
3 priorities for state school aid
4 reform essentially in two parts:
5 One was increase the size of the
6 pot, and the secondly distribute the
7 pot and distribute the pot fairly
8 and in accordance to need. That is

9 the billion dollar, multi-billion
10 dollar question.

11 DR. LIPP: I think it is called
12 the \$64,000 question.

13 MR. BIXHORN: Substantially more
14 than \$64,000.

15 But the answer to that question,
16 is the reform of the state aid
17 formula, or the restructuring of the
18 state aid formula, is something that
19 they talked about in Albany for
20 years. I think the governor called
21 it a dinosaur in the state of the
22 state speech five or six years ago.
23 That has not generated enough
24 interest to make significant changes
25 to it. The other thing, we talk a

2 lot about the formulas. The
3 formulas went through a major reform
4 in the mid '90's, and almost
5 immediately, after they were
6 reformed, they were capped because
7 they were unfunded.

8 So, one of the issues that came
9 up, and this is a late '90's issue,
10 was let the formulas run, and we
11 have several school districts in
12 Suffolk County that were rolling out
13 enormous numbers, additional
14 millions of dollars coming into
15 several very poor school districts
16 in the counties have the formulas
17 fully funded and run. So, one thing
18 we don't even know is perhaps the
19 formulas that exist may work, even
20 though there is not a significant
21 recognition of regional cost

22 differences. There is recognition
23 of wealth and need, but the
24 formulas, in essence, almost
25 immediately after they were

53

1 10/24/06

2 developed, were capped and they've
3 never really been allowed to run.
4 So, the reform people that are going
5 to look at these formulas, and I
6 assume it is going to be up to the
7 people in Albany to do it. Probably
8 they'll start and look at the
9 existing formulas and does some what
10 ifs and see what would happen if the
11 existing formulas were allowed to
12 run and they were fully funded.
13 Because a number of years ago there
14 were significant amounts of dollars

15 being held back because the money
16 was not there to fund them.

17 DR. FORMAN: I want to thank you,
18 Gary. That was an excellent
19 presentation. You had a lot of
20 great data in it, but it wasn't
21 material that we were not at least
22 vaguely familiar with. For the most
23 part we do not get our fair share of
24 state aid. Long Island schools are
25 good. They are. We appreciate your

54

1 10/24/06

2 hard work. One of the discussions,
3 or the elements of the discussions
4 we have been having on this
5 commission, Legislators D'Amaro and
6 Losquadro, was we really want to try
7 to help make changes on the margins.

8 We want to, I understand that your
9 presentation shows that when we do
10 adjust our spending is in line with
11 the rest of the state, or even
12 better. I'm wondering if you can
13 give me some feedback, either now or
14 in writing at some point, about the
15 role that perhaps BOCES could play
16 in the future reducing expenditures.
17 One of the things that has been
18 bantered around, since I have worked
19 on the financing government on Long
20 Island Report of the State Property
21 Tax Commission on Long Island in the
22 early '90's, was that in some sense
23 BOCES had become almost, for lack of
24 a better way to phrase it, part of
25 the problem, in the sense that it

10/24/06

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2 was selling certain programs and
3 services to school districts. I
4 guess it is still the requirement
5 that two school districts need to
6 want that service in order to
7 provide -- I'm wondering if there is
8 a way, the way, BOCES goes about
9 offering programs and services could
10 be changed in order to reduce the
11 cost of school districts. We have
12 heard from several district
13 representatives that have said BOCES
14 costs on fact, not that great.
15 They're supposed to be saving the
16 school districts money. In fact,
17 they're not. I understand your
18 situation, but if you can help us
19 clarify the BOCES role would be
20 helpful to the commission.

21 MR. BIXHORN: I would be happy to
22 do so. I assume that you don't want
23 me to do that right now. I can
24 either provide you it in writing or
25 set up a work session. We have

56

1 10/24/06

2 plenty of information, and I'm
3 familiar with the concerns about
4 BOCES, and I think there are answers
5 to those questions. But, the bottom
6 line is BOCES is structurally a
7 terrific resource for all of New
8 York State, and I think it is an
9 underutilized resource, and I think
10 the more people that participate,
11 the more sharing that occurs, the
12 more cost effective the services
13 become.

14 So, I would be happy to provide
15 the commission with additional
16 services.

17 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Dr. Forman,
18 thank you for raising that point.
19 Our primary responsibility in this
20 commission is to look at ways of
21 being more efficient in our cutting
22 expenses, of course, without
23 effecting those marks that the
24 students are showing in performance.
25 What I would like to do is to be

57

1 10/24/06
2 able to reach out to you about
3 coming back and doing a work
4 session, if you make yourself
5 available, so we can at least get
6 some answers to those questions as

7 well.

8 MS. WILLET: Refresh my mind, is
9 it true that the capping has a more
10 unfair effect upon Long Island?

11 MR. BIXHORN: On the state aid
12 formulas?

13 MS. WILLET: Yes.

14 MR. BIXHORN: It is such an old
15 issue. It is like I said it, is
16 something that had not been really
17 addressed for a long time. We're so
18 far off a formula that it is
19 something that has not been assessed
20 in a long time. Initially, when the
21 caps were initially implemented it
22 did have a more dramatic effect down
23 state than it did on other regions
24 in the state.

25 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Any other

1 10/24/06

2 questions? Mr. Bixhorn, thank you
3 very, very much for making yourself
4 available and your presentation.

5 MR. BIXHORN: I failed to
6 acknowledge Andrea Grooms, a
7 researcher with our organization,
8 who did most of the work in this
9 report, and two other people on the
10 staff, Shea Diguera and Candice
11 Wexilacka (phonetic spellings) who
12 were also instrumental in putting
13 this cost report together.

14 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: We appreciate
15 their efforts as well. We'll be in
16 touch.

17 Very briefly, if you arrived late
18 and would like to address the
19 commission be sure to fill out a

20 green card. If anyone needs one
21 we'll get one to you right away.

22 We're going, now, to go call up
23 in the order that they have been
24 received. Those who want to
25 address the commission just a few

59

1 10/24/06

2 quick ground rules. We ask that you
3 kindly keep your comments to what
4 this commission is trying to do,
5 explore and that is, as I mentioned
6 earlier, school district expenses
7 and recommendations with respect to
8 cost cutting efficiencies, and
9 further, because of time constraints
10 as we've done at our first meeting,
11 we will limit each speaker to
12 roughly five minutes. I'd

13 appreciate that. Gather your
14 thoughts, what is on your mind. I
15 do ask you be mindful of the
16 five-minute rule.

17 With that said, I would like to
18 call the first person on the list,
19 which is Allan Gerstenlauer.

20 Good evening, sir.

21 MR. GERSTENLAUER: Good evening.
22 Thank you for your invitation to
23 speak before you this evening. My
24 name is Allan Gerstenlauer. I am
25 the superintendent of the Longwood

60

1 10/24/06

2 Central School District in Middle
3 Island.

4 A few weeks ago the state
5 education department released a list

6 identifying 75 school districts that
7 are in need of special assistance
8 from the state because of low
9 performance by students with
10 disabilities, and they identified
11 they were determined by graduation
12 rates, dropout rates, performance on
13 the fourth and eighth grade ELA and
14 math assessments.

15 In his press release the
16 commissioner cited, what I thought
17 was a very interesting statistic.
18 He said that 55 percent statewide of
19 students with disabilities are in
20 the 75 districts that he identified
21 as needing assistance. There are
22 somewhat over 700 districts in the
23 state, so we're talking about a
24 little bit better than half the
25 population of pupils with

10/24/06

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2 disabilities being in about ten
3 percent of our schools. It strikes
4 me, while every school district has
5 it's own set of challenges, I submit
6 that districts like Longwood with
7 large populations of vulnerable
8 students due to poverty, children
9 with limited English proficiency,
10 special needs, those districts face
11 some unique challenges in assuring
12 that every child is successful. I
13 believe that Longwood is up to
14 meeting those challenges, and in
15 terms of the deficiencies that
16 you're talking about, there are a
17 couple of things that I would like
18 to share with you in terms of what

19 we have done over the last several
20 year ago and some of the concerns
21 that we have.

22 Several years ago we embarked on
23 an effort with BOCES to provide
24 special education services in a more
25 efficient and effective manner, and

62

1 10/24/06

2 we began by identifying students who
3 we traditionally would have
4 tuitioned over to BOCES programs,
5 and with the thought in mind of
6 bringing those students back into
7 our district to provide the services
8 in house rather than in
9 out-of-district placement, and with
10 the thinking being that children
11 would probably be better off served

12 in their home schools, and that we
13 may be able to realize some cost
14 savings through tuition and some
15 commonness of scales, as we have
16 mentioned. That was a fairly
17 successful program, and once we got
18 down that road it lead to
19 establishing several programs,
20 including an ADA Program for
21 autistic children.

22 In our district, we currently
23 have four classes in our district.
24 We have a fairly substantial program
25 for our life skills students with

63

1 10/24/06

2 programs in virtually all of our
3 schools, and we have found, again,
4 that students benefited by being

5 able to attend their home schools,
6 and now we have an ability to offer
7 slots to neighboring schools on a
8 tuition basis to those districts
9 that may not have the numbers to
10 sustain the programs that Longwood
11 has.

12 Our next step was to bring BOCES
13 classes into our facilities, and
14 that was to the benefit of both
15 BOCES and Longwood. We currently
16 have nine, what they call 811,
17 self-contained special education
18 classes that are housed in our C-4
19 buildings, our middle school and our
20 junior high school. That program
21 has been so successful that
22 yesterday, in a conversation with
23 our junior building principal, the
24 administration of our junior high

25 school and BOCES program are looking

64

1 10/24/06

2 at an individual student who they're
3 considering for mainstreaming. He
4 is a non-district resident in the
5 BOCES we house in our junior high
6 school. They're hoping to offer him
7 some mainstreaming classes in our
8 program as a test case to see if he
9 can return to some programs in his
10 district. That has been very, very
11 successful.

12 We have also provided, on a
13 regional basis, an extended school
14 year. That is a summer program for
15 students whose IEP's require
16 year-round educational experience.
17 This past summer we had about 90

18 students that were Longwood
19 residents to attend that program,
20 about 60 students from out of the
21 district attended on a tuition
22 basis.

23 So, we're making some efforts to
24 run a program more efficiently to be
25 able to provide better services and

65

1 10/24/06

2 opportunities for those most
3 vulnerable students. And while
4 Mr. Bixhorn's presentation focused
5 on state aid I would like to look at
6 the other end of that.

7 One of the disappointments that
8 we had, some superintendents met
9 with Congressman Bishop last week,
10 and he advised us right now the

11 funding for IBEA looks like it will
12 be about 17 percent which is a
13 reduction of several percentage
14 points from over recent years.
15 Which, again, put's us in a
16 difficult spot. Combined with that
17 the Title One Fund that provides
18 services for our vulnerable kids has
19 been reduced just in Longwood by
20 several hundred thousand dollars in
21 over recent years. So, we're trying
22 to implement programs that we view
23 as cost savings and more efficient.
24 We're, at the same time, not
25 realizing savings to our taxpayers

66

1 10/24/06

2 because we are trying to plug the
3 gap with funding that has been

4 diminished over the recent years.

5 So, my plea is that we be given a

6 fighting chance to do the things

7 that we know we can do to provide

8 for the children that are in our

9 charge, and you have a difficult and

10 unenviable task. I ask as we look

11 at ways to explore greater

12 efficiencies, combining services

13 providing for special needs

14 children, and different ways that we

15 also seek ways that we can guarantee

16 appropriate funding for students. I

17 think this, too, goes hand in hand.

18 If we are to be successful, our

19 children are to be successful.

20 I appreciate your focus on

21 efficiencies, and we also need to

22 look at the other end of that which

23 is to provide adequate funding. I

24 truly appreciate your time this
25 evening, and I don't envy your task,

67

1 10/24/06

2 but I admire the work that you're
3 doing. Thank you very much.

4 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Thank you very
5 much.

6 Next on my list is Dr. Michael
7 Mensch.

8 DR. MENSCH: Thank you for the
9 opportunity to speak this evening.
10 I serve as the Chief Operating
11 Officer of Western Suffolk BOCES and
12 Gary's counterpart, and for the
13 record, Gary, never gives a short
14 report. But they're meaningful and
15 full of relative information.

16 My purpose of being here this

17 evening is one, to acknowledge the
18 work of the commission on behalf of
19 18 superintendents, our school
20 boards and the Western Suffolk BOCES
21 School Board. We know it is
22 difficult work and requires a lot of
23 patience. I would like to take a
24 little different approach to my
25 comments, as such, beginning by

68

1 10/24/06

2 indicating to you I think we
3 recognize that the solution and the
4 problems in front of us are really
5 goalable. To give you an example,
6 at Western Suffolk we have just
7 recently concluded three collective
8 bargain sessions where we settled
9 with our custodians, secretaries,

10 our teachers. With the teacher
11 group we were successful in moving
12 their contribution on health
13 insurance from 10 percent to 20
14 percent. Our family health plan,
15 our Empire plan is \$14,000. So,
16 they used pay \$1,400 contribution.
17 In the course of this contract they
18 need to pay \$2,800 in contribution.
19 For teachers that took a lot of
20 work, and frankly both sides were
21 highly cooperative. The backside of
22 that is that the Empire Plan, across
23 the state, went up 10, 12 and 15
24 percent to the agency. So, it went
25 up \$1,400, and it goes up that every

1 10/24/06

2 year. We know that in terms of

3 putting a prospective on the
4 pressure of school districts, any
5 county agency, the state agency has
6 to meet the bills. To pay the bills
7 is phenomenal. From a global point
8 of view we have to talk, even if it
9 is beyond our sphere of influence,
10 about those kind of factors and
11 various solutions. I was up at
12 Cornell University seeing one of the
13 kids and I saw a big bumper sticker
14 that said, there is always money for
15 war, there is never money for
16 education. I wonder if there is
17 money for health insurance. So,
18 it's just a point. I would like to
19 put a spin on some of the
20 conversation.

21 The other piece of this is civil
22 service. All of our employees, our

23 clerical got just about a three
24 percent raise in my agency as part
25 the their settlement. About ten

70

1 10/24/06

2 years experience they make \$40,000.
3 \$40,000. They got three percent,
4 they got 1,200 bucks, pretax. In
5 the past year they have spent over a
6 thousand. 20 gallons of gas a week
7 to get to work they spent a thousand
8 bucks.

9 Another prospective for us to
10 think about, we're under the gun and
11 the spending and the cost of -- it
12 just doesn't make sense. We need to
13 talk about those things. In terms
14 of BOCES, obviously, we're proud of
15 the work that we do, and I recognize

16 clearly that we need to contain
17 costs and are working hard at it. I
18 would like, also, for us to remember
19 the fact that many of our vocational
20 programs, not just in eastern and
21 western Suffolk, also in Nassau,
22 we're turning out hundreds and
23 thousands of kids annually into the
24 Long Island work force, auto
25 mechanics, cosmetologists, nurses,

71

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10/24/06

2 plumbers. You name it we're turning
3 kids out with licenses. They're
4 going onto the culinary program, and
5 we can't lose sight of what BOCES
6 does for the Long Island school
7 district. Yup we need to watch our
8 costs and we're working hard to do

9 that. Every year when with the
10 budget time comes around the present
11 governor is always talking about cut
12 the BOCES and BOCES programs. Do
13 you need BOCES? We seem to survive
14 every year. It is something to keep
15 in mind when that time comes upon
16 us. Long Island's economy is
17 dependant, in part, on BOCES
18 operation and the kind of students
19 that we're turning out. It
20 mandates -- you know public school
21 has always been the democratic
22 pathway in our society. Teach kids
23 how to stay healthy, how to drive,
24 citizenship. You name it. We do
25 it. The mandates are just outlines.

2 The mandates without the funding.
3 The testing programs, alone, take
4 days upon days to score, and we have
5 to pay people to do that. Someone
6 has to stand up and start to talk
7 about that. We're not arguing with
8 higher standards, but they cost
9 money in this society.

10 We talked a little bit about the
11 health care and the last comment,
12 again, it may not be in the sphere
13 of -- we're subject to the
14 triborough decision. So, you know,
15 I see the heads going. It is really
16 tough to negotiate significant
17 changes that, you know, are based on
18 the times. The gas prices can go
19 up, LILCO can go up, everything can
20 up. In the school districts the
21 triborough locks us into even if we

22 don't settle. The costs go up. To
23 the point that this commission, our
24 superintendents and citizens can
25 make sort of a global approach it

73

1 10/24/06

2 would be appreciated. We appreciate
3 the efforts of the commission.
4 Again, thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Thank you for
6 taking the time.

7 Next speaker is Charlie
8 Richardson. Good evening.

9 MR. RICHARDSON: Good evening,
10 Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank you
11 very much for the opportunity to
12 address you, once again. I'm
13 hearing the talk that is almost
14 exclusive -- I know that the

15 objective of the task force is to
16 reduce costs, but also study quality
17 issues and study efficiency issues
18 and everybody else is going to talk
19 about the costs. I'm going to talk
20 about the efficiencies.

21 You have seen the statistics
22 back since 1965 when Lyndon
23 Johnson's Great Society Program
24 entered into effect. There was
25 hundreds of millions of federal

74

1 10/24/06

2 directed tax payor dollars going
3 into education in greater quantities
4 than before. And, yet, what we're
5 seeing is actually a slump in the
6 quality of the output as far as the
7 measurable quantities of literacy,

8 the performance of our kids in
9 science, and, so, there is something
10 wrong with this picture. We're left
11 with a decision that any rational
12 person would come to. Is there
13 something wrong with our gene pool,
14 or is there something wrong with the
15 system? Which one of those will you
16 buy and which one will you do
17 something about.

18 So, let's look at the system.
19 Still here in Suffolk County there
20 are kids who come out of our schools
21 and go into the community colleges,
22 and I have been in touch with people
23 in those community colleges,
24 recently, and over a period of
25 years, and somewhere around 50

10/24/06

1
2 percent of their incoming freshmen
3 need remedial courses before they
4 can do college work. I was at a
5 meeting this morning with Gary over
6 at the LIA offices, and everybody
7 there wanted to talk about -- you
8 know, the children don't study
9 dollars, they don't eat dollars.
10 There's got to be some attention to
11 what is done with those dollars,
12 and, yet, a few people around the
13 table would admit they come out and
14 can't read and write, but that gets
15 slipped under the rug. We don't
16 want to talk about that. Well
17 folks, if you look at the stats that
18 is where it's at. It goes in two
19 different ways. Let's divide the
20 issues slightly.

21 Literacy is an economic issue.
22 Literacy is costing us a lot of
23 money. We talked about that before,
24 in my previous submitted testimony.
25 We know that anguish of kids of

76

1 10/24/06

2 families who will follow the
3 criminal justice system in some way
4 in both counties are aware of the
5 connection between failure to learn
6 to read and violent behavior, and
7 one of the things that I submitted
8 to you this evening is a chapter out
9 of a book called "Retarding America,
10 the Imprison of Potential". The
11 author, the gentleman, Mike Gooden,
12 (phonetic spelling) who I know very
13 well, he was a, he had a research

14 fellowship in the U. S. Department
15 of Criminal Justice back in the
16 '80's, and he was studying the
17 effects of teaching reading to
18 incarcerated juveniles, and what he
19 found was there was a significant
20 decrease in their -- rate, once they
21 learned to read. He did a lot of
22 other investigations, too. The
23 chapter that I have given to you
24 this evening is a chapter called
25 "The Delinquent". Delinquency is

77

1 10/24/06

2 essential in the community, and what
3 he is talking about is the ability
4 to read, and it's a summary of some
5 of the research that has been done
6 over the years linking delinquency

7 behavior with failure to learn to
8 read on an almost exclusive basis,
9 especially a student staying
10 focused --

11 CO-CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO: One
12 minute more, just to wrap up.

13 MR. RICHARSON: Okay. I don't
14 feel like I'm on the level with the
15 school administrators, as far as
16 time allowance. I think we're
17 stacking the deck here. So, I don't
18 know how you're going to do it.

19 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: That is
20 absolutely not true. I really don't
21 appreciate that comment. I'd
22 appreciate it if we keep the
23 comments to a minimum from the
24 audience.

25 MR. RICHARDSON: Okay, my

10/24/06

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2

previous submission back I gave you

3

earlier, that was about Procky

4

(phonetic spelling) Elementary

5

School in Baltimore, who in the

6

early '90's they made a change to

7

curriculum that was used by a nearby

8

private school, the Talbot School.

9

By the way, this is typical from 90

10

percent minority and five percent

11

reduced how long, and so forth, in

12

about five years the percentile of

13

test scores went up about 18 to 20

14

and went down by a factor of four.

15

Now, I talked to that principal

16

of the school a couple times before.

17

She retired, which was in the late

18

'90's. I asked her what about your

19

costs, did they go up or down? She

20 said, our costs went down. The city
21 kept cutting up us. We're down to
22 almost a half of where we were
23 getting before and still had
24 results. I know she's retired from
25 there, and the program is being

79

1 10/24/06

2 phased out. That was one of the
3 fears of that lady retiring was why
4 that school was not included -- no
5 excuses that came out from the
6 heritage foundation.

7 LEGISLATOR LOSQUADRO: I gave you
8 some extra time because of the
9 interruption. Very quickly.

10 MR. RICHARDSON: I'll save some
11 other remarks for next time. I'll
12 be seeing you at the next hearing,

13 and more to the point. I'm going to
14 throw down that challenge to you
15 which I think is something that --

16 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Thank you.
17 The next speaker is Shirley
18 Anderson.

19 MS. ANDERSON: We're talking
20 about the cost of education and what
21 Charlie just said is so true. And
22 it seems to be where we get most of
23 your information. This past weekend
24 Lou Dobbs had a principal of a
25 school that had been in the bottom

80

1 10/24/06

2 school in the state and he brought
3 it up to the top school. It can be
4 done. It will be done. I recommend
5 to you to remember about 30 years

6 ago when 60 Minutes did a
7 presentation of Barbara Collins
8 School in Chicago, a school in the
9 basement of the project. 25 years
10 later they went back, and they
11 gathered the kids that had been in
12 sixth grade at the time that they
13 had been there before. They got as
14 many of them as they could. They
15 were all black kids. They all
16 succeeded. Most of them had gone to
17 college. Not one of them had been
18 in trouble with the law. What did
19 Margaret Collins do that we're not
20 doing in the public school, and that
21 is teaching the structure of the
22 English language. The biggest group
23 of kids that have problems are the
24 ones that cannot read and write and
25 spell. I spent 40 years at this,

10/24/06

1
2 and you give the statistics of the
3 good school districts and the bad
4 school districts. What you don't
5 recognize is that in the wealthy
6 school districts how many of the
7 parents have taken their kid out of
8 the public schools, or if they have
9 them in the public school are having
10 them privately tutored so they can
11 succeed. Yes, we changed the
12 regents. They were not doing well.
13 Now the regent scores are better,
14 but regents are -- I was speaking
15 recently to a French teacher. The
16 French teacher is now on the fourth
17 grade level. Have we really done
18 anything to help the kids? For your

19 records, if you can go back, I can't
20 give you the year, but I can almost
21 give you the day, we took all of
22 this to federal court and won. The
23 court case is Riley verses AMBA
24 (phonetic spelling). We had three
25 volunteer lawyers that helped us.

82

1 10/24/06

2 We took this to federal court, and
3 we won in federal court. A group of
4 kids, the only one that testified
5 from the State of New York, was the
6 assistant to Riley. And I would
7 meet her in the ladies room, and she
8 would say, Shirley, we know you're
9 right, but we don't want to spend
10 the money. Well, you all spend the
11 money like mad and getting the

12 results are not what they should be.
13 I recommend that you look at
14 that very carefully. The other
15 thing is that the political part of
16 education is amazing to me. The
17 people that get in control, to make
18 decisions, either come of the school
19 districts are making the problem.
20 I'm not naming individual teachers.
21 I've spent enough time with teachers
22 training to know. Like the girl
23 next door when she got her master's
24 in special ed she said, you know,
25 she calls me Aunt Shirley, I could

83

1 10/24/06

2 learn everything that I did in two
3 years in five days. Because she had
4 taken the training that we had, and

5 she knew what those kids really
6 needed. Now you can continue to
7 talk money, or you can start to talk
8 helping the kids and starting in
9 kindergarten and first grade and
10 teaching them the language. I ask
11 you how many of you know how many
12 types of syllables are in the
13 English language? Probably none of
14 you. I asked that to a person with
15 a doctorate in English and they
16 don't know it. I ask my six-year
17 old grandson and he knows it. Thank
18 you.

19 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Next on the
20 list is Arlene Barresi.

21 MS. BARRESI: Good evening. I'm
22 Arlene Barresi. I'm on the Middle
23 Country Board of Trustees. I want
24 to thank the commission for giving

25 this opportunity to offer

84

1 10/24/06

2 suggestions.

3 The Suffolk County taxes --
4 allows you to tax in -- and at
5 Middle Country we currently have to
6 borrow \$29,000,000. This would not
7 be necessary if the Suffolk County
8 Legislature issued quarterly
9 payments. It would not effect the
10 taxpayers since the money is in an
11 escrow account. It would save our
12 school district more than half the
13 interest of the -- getting have of
14 our tax relief in September would
15 save a million dollars. Nassau
16 County pays the county taxes four
17 time a year.

18 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Before you go
19 on, your taxes, you're talking about
20 the taxes increase --

21 MS. BARRESI: Right.

22 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: What is the
23 system now? What are the dates,
24 what are the times?

25 MS. BARRESI: I am not really

85

1 10/24/06

2 familiar, but I know we don't get it
3 for September spending. We have to
4 borrow money.

5 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Right, and
6 when do you finally receive the
7 funds?

8 MS. BARRESI: Probably like twice
9 a year. Our spending comes quicker
10 than twice a year.

11 LADY IN AUDIENCE: We know that
12 the county is getting interest on
13 that money.

14 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Point of
15 information. You're talking about a
16 two-plus-two-stage system. I
17 believe the problem is that a
18 separate tax system for the school
19 district, as opposed to the other
20 tax municipalities, that have
21 perhaps a calendar year as opposed
22 to the school year which you start
23 in September. There have been a lot
24 of proposals for the two-plus-two
25 systems. One of the problems is the

86

1 10/24/06

2 first year you have to collect an
3 extra half of the year of taxes.

4 This is a one time, if you will,
5 problem that that needs to be dealt
6 with. There is no simple solution,
7 to my knowledge.

8 As far as Nassau County is
9 concerned they do have the
10 two-plus-two system. However, they
11 don't have it right either. They
12 don't pay in September. I believe
13 they pay in November. The
14 two-plus-two system is a good
15 system, theoretically. I sort of
16 support it, but have not figured out
17 a way to do it to get everybody on
18 the same page. It is not that
19 simple.

20 Thank you for raising that
21 issue. We appreciate it.

22 Next on the list is L-O, Louis,
23 possibly Joe Gorman.

24 MR. GORMAN: Fred Gorman.

25 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Sorry about

87

1 10/24/06

2 that.

3 MR. GORMAN: If you recall when I
4 first came here we started
5 discussing some myths that I thought
6 you should look at, and then we went
7 right to the heart of the issue. I
8 spoke to Dr. Laria about his plan,
9 which is one way that I think you
10 can save money and that is by
11 coordinating all the resources. But
12 in order to get school districts,
13 and other municipalities, because it
14 should not be limited to join any
15 kind of special fund you need a --
16 candy. I'm going to suggest that

17 you sit down with the other
18 committee and you suggest to them
19 that if the debt taxes repeal look
20 at perhaps maybe three percent on
21 every hundred thousand dollars of
22 wealth as a means of raising other
23 taxes. Look at some sin taxes. Put
24 together a healthy piece of change,
25 and then say to the municipalities,

88

1 10/24/06

2 that are out there, if you join our
3 purchasing group bring your
4 employees, your benefits, in here.
5 Let's handle everything. You can
6 also coordinate with BOCES, you can
7 probably make a tremendous saving.
8 You can pass that on and you would
9 have every right to offer those

10 types of incentives that you pick up
11 from the sin taxes, that would have
12 taken your taxes off of the property
13 owner, and it would put it in an
14 area where nobody is going to deal
15 with. Once you're dead, you're
16 dead, you know?

17 So, that is all I have to say
18 about that. I think it's a
19 worthwhile thing. I really hope we
20 do get a chance to talk to Steve
21 about that. Just think, all these
22 school districts out there and all
23 these administrators every now and
24 then, can you imagine if all the
25 transportation on Long Island was

1 10/24/06

2 handled by one source can you think

3 of the money we would be able to
4 save on the special busses which
5 cost \$35,000 a kid if we can cross
6 school district lines? I suggest
7 that you give that some serious
8 consideration.

9 Also, I'm going to close, but I
10 want to mention something about
11 that. I always thought that the per
12 pupil cost is not the same thing as
13 taking what the school district's
14 budget is. For example, 266,000,000
15 and dividing it by 15,000 students.
16 It doesn't take all those factors
17 into consideration. If there are
18 other factors in this, correct me if
19 I'm wrong, if it is a different
20 number I think people here are going
21 to look at that number and should
22 know that that is not exactly 100

23 percent of your expenses, or 100
24 percent of what you're spending.

25 Also, when I look at the report,

90

1 10/24/06

2 the first thing that struck me kind
3 of strange, I understand high wealth
4 districts have better genes. Let's
5 be honest. That doesn't mean that
6 poor people do not have good genes.
7 None was poorer than my father. He
8 had great genes. He passed them
9 onto me. You can't take 70,000
10 students on one side of the equation
11 and 25,000 on the other side of the
12 equation and say this is a balanced
13 number. This represents that. I
14 think it would have been better if
15 we would have taken 70,000 students

16 from our wealthiest school districts
17 and compared them to 70,000 students
18 from our poorest school districts.
19 Also, taking into account the school
20 districts -- in the middle, because
21 there are brilliant kids just like
22 there are terrific athletes. And
23 there are kids and God Bless them,
24 they could be the most wonderful
25 human beings in the world, but if

91

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10/24/06

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they only have an IQ of 75 or 85 and
are just not going to get a regents
diploma, but there's a financial
mandate that gives them -- but can't
give them a regular diploma. Take
those into account. Really examine
that report. Review everything,

9 understand what they mean when they
10 say "professional salaries". I
11 think you may come up with a
12 different view. You may want to
13 look at a little bit more
14 information than what is in this
15 report. Lou Koppleman, by the way,
16 in 1994, said when he turned around
17 he looked at their books he said
18 they were so confusing, there were
19 millions missing. He couldn't find
20 it. He had to give up. Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Thank you.

22 The last card that I have, this
23 evening, is Mr. Philip Goldstein.

24 MR. GOLDSTEIN: First of all I'd
25 like to concur with some of the

2 comments that were made. I have a
3 long history of involvement in local
4 government and county. None of you
5 appear to recognize me, nor do I
6 recognize you. But for many years I
7 attended the county legislature and
8 a former presiding officer referred
9 to me as Jiminy Cricket. The point
10 that I'm making is this. I attended
11 meetings that went on into the wee
12 hours of the morning, because our
13 elected representatives, who we
14 employ, at least had the courtesy,
15 afforded us the opportunity to fully
16 express our thoughts, and I don't
17 think it is right for you to give
18 greater credence to somebody because
19 of a title that they bear and not
20 afford the members of the audience,
21 especially who took the time and

22 trouble to come here to express
23 themselves the opportunity to fully
24 do so. Enough said.

25 In so far as my own bona fide --

93

1 10/24/06

2 concerned I have 30 plus years in
3 the New York City School System,
4 where I helped to create the United
5 Federation of Teachers. I am, also,
6 a founding father of the
7 Independence Party of the State of
8 New York, aside from that. Insanity
9 is evidenced when somebody
10 attempting to accomplish something
11 engages in the same practice over
12 and over again, despite the fact
13 that he does or she does not succeed
14 in accomplishing the goal. Tonight

15 I heard talk about a traditional
16 system and the concerns of the costs
17 in maintaining that traditional
18 system, and a few people, who you
19 squelched, tried to point out to you
20 that there are other concerns that
21 ought to be addressed, not just
22 simply dollars. That is one of the
23 things I want to speak about, and
24 that is the failure of the system.
25 Let me give you a simple concrete

94

1 10/24/06

2 example. Let's take a 30 minute
3 television program. Stop and think
4 about the production of the 30
5 minute television program. I use
6 that as an analogy with a classroom
7 teacher who produces a 30 minute

8 program in a sense and performs that
9 program in their class before a
10 limited audience.

11 Millions of dollars are spent to
12 produce that one 30 minute program.
13 The responsibility for the
14 production is divided up amongst a
15 host of specialists. You have
16 writers, you have actors, you have
17 technicians, you have producers, et
18 cetera and so forth. But oft time
19 the end result is the fact that
20 somebody sitting in front of their
21 television set picks up their remote
22 control and zap. There goes all of
23 that money, all of that time and
24 effort and energy, because the
25 audience was not receptive. Now

10/24/06

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think of a classroom teacher. I was

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responsible for producing five 30

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minute programs a day, five

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days-a-week, for 30 plus years. Who

6

in the world has the talent, or the

7

capability, to sustain themselves

8

and do such a task. It flies in the

9

face of reality. You ignore the

10

changing world in which we exist.

11

Thank you one minute. I don't

12

know why I bothered to come if I'm

13

not afforded the opportunity to

14

fully express my ideas. The point

15

that I'm trying to make is this. In

16

the post Korean war era technology

17

impacted our society and did

18

horrendous things to our education

19

system. Number one, is putting an

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end to the fact that young people

21 could drop out of the school system
22 and maintain their personal dignity
23 because they could go out and get a
24 job. We wanted to lay sewer pipe.
25 We have 20 men with picks and

96

1 10/24/06

2 shovels, and they dug a ditch and
3 lay a sewer pipe. Then along came
4 the backhoe and 20 men no longer had
5 employment, because one man with a
6 backhoe could dig that ditch and the
7 world changed. But, at the same
8 time, the educational system was
9 told, hey, what are we going to do
10 with all these kids who used to drop
11 out and had the dignity of
12 employment. We can't employ them
13 anymore.

14 CO-CHAIR LOSQUADRO: Number one,
15 I was on the legislature when you
16 used to come and speak. You may not
17 recognize me, but I certainly
18 recognize you when you came in.
19 Your time has expired, but we do
20 have a question from one of the
21 members of the town, if you would
22 indulge him?

23 MR. BYRNE: It is not so much a
24 question. I just want to know, the
25 people in the front row, a lot of

97

1 10/24/06

2 those people are personal friends of
3 mine. I don't think anybody up here
4 is given a time differential. I
5 don't want you to think that is the
6 case. That is not the case. The

7 second thing is a lot of things that
8 these people are saying I happen to
9 agree with, but I don't know if this
10 form is the forum where we're going
11 to change the entire system in the
12 United States of America. What
13 we're trying to do is --

14 MR. GOLDSTEIN: The Suffolk
15 County Legislature is famous for the
16 fact --

17 CO-CHAIR LOSQUADRO:
18 Mr. Goldstein, please do not
19 interrupt the gentleman. He is
20 giving you the courtesy of asking
21 him a question. Please do not
22 interrupt him.

23 MR. GOLDSTEIN: But he is making
24 a point that is erroneous, and I
25 cannot allow him to continue.

1 10/24/06

2 CO-CHAIR LOSQUADRO: You can
3 allow him that. He is asking you a
4 question. Please, sir, finish your
5 question.

6 MR. BYRNE: Again, I am not
7 trying to start an argument. What
8 I'm trying to say is we're trying to
9 pick this apart bits and pieces and
10 get things done. I'm not paid to be
11 up here. I don't know anybody who
12 is. We're not against you. We're
13 not your enemy. We're trying to
14 find some solutions here. I feel
15 that you're, like, mad. I'm mad,
16 too. I'm a taxpayer. I'm afraid
17 for everybody in this room. I don't
18 know if we're going to get anywhere
19 if we're going to yell at each

20 other. I don't think that anybody
21 is getting a different allotment of
22 time.

23 That's what I'm trying to say.

24 Okay.

25 MR. GOLDSTEIN: Hip, hip hooray.

99

1 10/24/06

2 And, thus, whatever I have to say
3 will be for naught. I won't even
4 get to finish what I have to say.
5 At least I would like to think there
6 is a certain amount of logic to what
7 I was saying. Oft times when I
8 would speak before the legislature I
9 would get applause from my fellow
10 citizens in the audience who had
11 appreciation for the things that I
12 was saying, and that is why I was

13 referred to as Jiminy Cricket,
14 because the presiding officer felt
15 that I served as the conscience to
16 the legislator.

17 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Thank you, Mr.
18 Goldstein. We appreciate your
19 coming in.

20 We do have a couple of
21 additional cards filled out. Next
22 is Robert Donato.

23 MR. DONATO: Good evening.

24 Well, we're here for
25 recommendations, so I'm going to

100

1 10/24/06

2 give you a few. Seems we have 70
3 school districts on Long Island. I
4 think that is excessive. I was
5 before a system --

6 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: In Suffolk.

7 MR. DONATO: Sorry, in Suffolk.

8 I was before a system of town
9 school districts, in other words,
10 Islip Town, Smithtown School
11 District, Brookhaven School
12 District. That would eliminate 70
13 down to a dozen. I think that would
14 be a big savings. Reduce the number
15 of administrators. According to a
16 Newsday article Bay Shore has 31
17 administrators, Half Hollow Hills 50
18 administrators, Brentwood 91
19 administrators. I can't imagine 91
20 administrators running around the
21 school finding things to do. I'm
22 not familiar with the school
23 district. It seems insane to me to
24 have these many people employed with
25 lavish perks and cars and benefits.

1 10/24/06

2 It's crazy. I think there should be
3 more contribution towards the
4 medical expenses, towards retirement
5 plans, maybe switch to a 401K
6 System, and if you do make any
7 changes it is important to write the
8 legislation properly so it does not
9 disrupt the school student location.
10 In other words, in Islip Town you
11 don't want to switch a kid from
12 Oakdale to Brentwood just to spite
13 him because of property taxes -- to
14 switch kids around. Maybe we should
15 cap some salaries. Teachers deserve
16 to get paid well. Of course we all
17 do -- making \$200,000 a year. It is
18 a little excessive. It is getting

19 out of hand. The older
20 administration seems to be steeling
21 money from kids. Older
22 administration, older perks, older
23 salaries. It's too much. It should
24 be controlled. In York County,
25 South Carolina they passed a

102

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10/24/06

2

property tax relief law with a new

3

one cent sales tax. They hope to

4

fund the schools almost in entirety.

5

It is brand new, so they don't have

6

any results yet.

7

That's it. Some suggestions I

8

have. Do the best you can, please,

9

we need your help.

10

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Thank you.

11

The last card we have is Joan

12 O'Grady.

13 MS. O'GRADY: Hello, my name is
14 Joan O'Grady and I'm here
15 representing the Middle Country
16 Legislator Committee. On that
17 committee I represent the senior
18 citizens in our district. I am the
19 financial secretary for the Middle
20 Country Retirees Association. We
21 have, approximately, 420 case
22 members, must be about maybe half or
23 a little bit less of those total
24 retirees. I can tell you the fact
25 that 283 of those 420 have left the

103

1 10/24/06

2 state. They have gone, retired to
3 tax friendly areas, Florida, South
4 Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia.

5 All those states. We send them a
6 letter four-times-a-year. I write
7 it and call it News from Home, and
8 almost any person who gets it will
9 write me back and tell me how much
10 they miss being on Long Island.
11 Those people that left left because
12 of taxes. I'm sure that more than
13 half the them would be snowbirds if
14 they could go down and spend their
15 winters down there. They want to
16 come home. A lot of them have come
17 back to Lake Ronkonkoma, back to
18 Medford. They want their friends,
19 their family. They want their Long
20 Island.

21 Long Island is one of the best
22 places to live in so far as
23 geography. We have a few months of
24 winter. Many of us love the winter.

25 What I want to tell you is they took

104

1 10/24/06

2 with them their state pensions. It
3 is money that New York State is
4 paying them, and they're is spending
5 it elsewhere. Dollars for medical
6 and money for doctors are all down
7 there. They're not paying our
8 doctors. They're paying it down
9 there, and they left for that.

10 Now many of us still here on
11 Long Island remember the years when
12 we had to pile on school buses and
13 travel to Albany and beg for more
14 money. It's been done to this day,
15 and low and behold a day before the
16 budget votes for the school budget
17 along comes a million and a half

18 dollars from the state. If is was
19 there the day before why wasn't it
20 there the month before. We always
21 have to beg. Nine times out of ten
22 we get it. We get it from the
23 representatives. Senator Flanagan
24 has been wonderful, Englebright.
25 They have all been wonderful. We

105

1 10/24/06

2 have to go to each one of them and
3 beg. We need a planetarium. It is
4 a beautiful planetarium. It has no
5 equipment because technology has
6 changed so quickly we can't keep up
7 with it. So, we ask for that. We
8 need ecologically sound buses. We
9 have to go beg for all that money.
10 The money is up there. It is up in

11 Albany.

12 What we feel is that the formula
13 for doling it out is wrong. As
14 Mr. Bixhorn has said, our shares
15 have not changed. They remained
16 12.7. Something is wrong.

17 Something is absolutely wrong here,
18 and more money is leaving the state
19 because of the taxes on Long Island.

20 As a senior citizen I don't like
21 to be in the position, and as a
22 senior citizen I have to tell you it
23 is taxing us out of existence here.
24 Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN D'AMARO: Thank you.

106

1 10/24/06

2 Anyone else would like to address
3 the committee who has not done so

4 already? Okay then, I guess that
5 concludes the public portion of this
6 evening. I, again, want to thank
7 you on behalf of all the commission
8 members, everyone. I know it is
9 difficult to find time and your
10 participation is essential. I
11 personally appreciate that, and I
12 assure you that we will take all
13 your comments under advisement and
14 consider them very carefully.

15 Thank you and have a good
16 evening.

17 (Time ended: 8:00 p.m)

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107

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C E R T I F I C A T E.

3

4

STATE OF NEW YORK)

:ss

5

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK)

6

7

I, KATHY J. DROSSEL, a Notary Public

8

within and for the State of New York, do hereby

9

certify:

10

THAT, the minutes from this committee

11

meeting are hereinbefore set forth, and that

12

such testimony is a true record given by such

13

testimony.

14

I further certify that I am not related

15

to any of the parties; and that I am in no way

16

interested in the outcome of this matter.

17 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set
18 my hand this 28th day of October, 2006.

19

20

21

KATHY J. DROSSEL

22

23

24

25